

THE REVOLUTIONARY  
ANTI-IMPERIALIST  
MOVEMENT



SELECTED ESSAYS

Organization for  
**LOOP**

# The Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Movement

## Selected Essays

This pamphlet is produced and published by LOOP,  
the Organization for the Liberation of Oppressed Peoples,  
an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist solidarity organization.  
You can learn more about LOOP at <http://fight4loop.org>.

*2020*

# Points of Unity

## LOOP

The Organization for the Liberation of Oppressed Peoples (LOOP) is a communist organization dedicated to the advance of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist politics.

**Decolonization.** LOOP is committed to decolonization, the repatriation of all Native land and the restoration of Native self-determination and lifeways on that land. Every inch of the settler nation now called “the united states” is stolen land, and the oppression of Native nations is rooted in this ongoing dispossession. LOOP struggles against all forms of settler colonial politics, both right and “left,” and unites with all demands and struggles which push forward the return of Native land and justice for Indigenous peoples.

**Anti-Imperialism.** The principal contradiction in the world is that between oppressed and oppressor nations. Our commitment to a proletarian and revolutionary internationalism means that we struggle to advance this principal contradiction in the favor of the world’s oppressed peoples and nations, the global majority. LOOP recognizes that a defining feature of imperialism today is an immense drain of surplus value from Global South labor to the parasitic nations of the Global North. LOOP works for the end of imperialism and demands the repatriation of this stolen wealth to its creators, the international proletariat.

**Communism.** LOOP’s aim is the achievement of communism, a classless society free of all forms of oppression. We have strategic confidence that the oppressed masses of the world will fight for and achieve a global society which is truly democratic, egalitarian, and guided by the principle of “from each according to her ability, to each according to her needs.” LOOP views the struggle against revisionism as an essential pillar of revolutionary politics.

**Feminism.** LOOP condemns the horrendous existence of patriarchy, the structural domination of society by men. LOOP opposes the injustices patriarchy commits against queer folks, and especially trans folks. LOOP rejects colonialist, imperialist, and Orientalist conceptions of gender and sexuality.

**Anti-Opportunist.** LOOP is in solidarity with other organizations and individuals who support anti-colonial and anti-imperialist politics. In doing so, LOOP upholds a principled commitment to internationalism as a cornerstone of proletarian politics. LOOP rejects the opportunist trend within the Global North for “left” groupings to form “red-brown” coalitions and facilitate fascist entryism into anti-imperialist circles.

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# Introduction

LOOP

In December 2019, one of the most prominent organizations popularizing anti-imperialist politics in the First World, the Revolutionary Anti-Imperialist Movement (RAIM), disbanded. While our ideas on politics and practice were different in various ways, similarities in our analyses of contemporary imperialism led LOOP and RAIM to work together on a few projects and broadly support each other's work.

A complete collection of RAIM's published works would likely run into the thousands of pages. This little pamphlet is not intended to express the breadth of RAIM's political line, nor is it intended to trace the development of that line. This pamphlet is also not a "best of" RAIM. There is much worth reading by RAIM that we do not include here. Instead, our goal in putting these essays together is to put in one place a handful of essays that LOOP believes have significant and ongoing usefulness in our educational and organizing work.

"What is the Proletariat?" returns to Marx in order to offer a succinct explanation of who the gravediggers of capitalism really are in the current epoch of imperialism – the super-exploited working class of the Global South. Both this essay and "Problems with First Worldism" criticize how most who (falsely) call themselves Marxist in the First World abandon political economy and replace the proletariat with the labor aristocracy, misidentifying and misrepresenting exploiters as the exploited.

"Pretending to be Reactionary" deals with a common problem: We find many people who call themselves socialists who think making reactionary comments or sharing reactionary memes is "funny" – but these expressions should also be read as declarations of a class stand. How we act in the world matters.

The final three essays are the most targeted. While plenty of so-called "socialists" in the United States will talk about hating the pigs employed by their local city governments, they tail after and support the pigs employed by their federal government. "Legionnaires" takes aim at this tendency. "Socialism in One Settler Colony" and "The Verizon Strike" describe how "left unity" and support for First World "labor" are based on the exploitation of oppressed nations within and without imperialist borders. Moreover, these essays point toward the true nature of the "socialism" that First Worldists and their settler colonial unions want – an apartheid parasitism, a national socialism based on the dispossession and plunder of Native nations alongside the working class and peasantry in the Third World.

# What is the Proletariat?

Nikolai Brown | 2014

In Marxist theory and analysis, the proletariat is a social category that is a central topic of analysis and discussion. Nevertheless, confusion abounds among Marxists over what exactly the proletariat is. In fact, much to the consternation of many normative Marxists, RAIM has developed a line which unequivocally states that a majority of the workers of First World oppressor nations are not part of the proletariat.

For most contemporary Marxists, the proletariat is a group of people which ‘owns nothing but its own labor-power, which it must sell to the bourgeoisie in order to survive.’ This is merely technical language for ‘all workers.’ For us, this definition is too broad and vague. After all, many First World workers accumulate plenty of commodities, some of them appreciable such as homes. In hard times, they can always re-sell their stuff. More to the point, if the proletariat is ‘all workers,’ then the term ‘proletariat’ is itself looted of its meaning, becoming a signifier of oppression only, and the reification of a highly heterogeneous group. Not surprisingly, efforts by such Marxists to organize the ‘proletariat’ as ‘all workers’ have met with consistent failure and often earned the animosity and dismissal of gender- and nationally-oppressed peoples.

Ignoring the modern Marxists for a moment, Engels described the proletariat as:

The proletariat is that class in society which lives entirely from the sale of its labor and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose sole existence depends on the demand for labor – hence, on the changing state of business, on the vagaries of unbridled competition.

By this definition, for example, workers who invest into a 401k or pension (thus investing into and earning a profit from capital) can’t technically be part of the proletariat. In 2012, 46% of employees in the US participated in such workplace retirement plans while 61% were eligible. This alone casts doubt on the typical Marxist line on ‘all workers’ or the whole ‘working-class’ being the proletariat.

So what then is the proletariat?

First of all, the proletariat is a class. A class is a group of people brought together and defined by their relationship to other groups within a mode of production. In the case of capitalism, classes are defined by their relationship to the accumulation of capital. The

proletariat is the class of people whose labor is the source of value, their exploitation being the engine and a primary source (along with nature) of capital expansion.

Not every member of the proletariat need be engaged in wage labor all the time; there exists the uniquely capitalist need for 'a reserve army of labor' only intermittently supplying formal labor-power. Nevertheless, the proletariat consists of a group whose members' exploited labor forms the basis of profit for the class of capital owners, the bourgeoisie.

Why is the proletariat significant?

According to orthodox Marxism, the proletariat was structurally, strategically, and increasingly subjectively poised to seize the means of production, economically liquidate the bourgeoisie, and transform the economy into one based on rational planning and the absence of antagonistically divided groups (i.e., classes) in the mode of production.

While today's conditions are somewhat different than in Marx's day, notably the ossification of structures of colonialism into imperialist parasitism, the basic significance of the proletariat as the exploited class is the same. It has the ability to collectively engage in the 'passive action' of withdrawing its labor from the capitalist system through not simply striking, but also by building dual power, anti-hegemonic institutions, and socialist economics systems. In doing so the proletariat transforms itself into its own ruling class via the resolution of its antagonistic relationship with the bourgeoisie.

So why are a majority of oppressor nation workers in countries like the United States, Israel, and Australia not part of the proletariat? Simply put, they are not exploited.

Value is based on the quantity of abstract labor-time. Value is described as containing labor-time in abstract because it is based on a temporal social average, which in today's world-economy must include the labor of all workers globally, from the children in African mines, to teenage girls in Asian sweatshop workers, to First World and metropole retail workers, to highly parasitical 'surplus' workers in the sales and finance sectors, among others.

Exploitation, then, is the supplying of a given quantity of labor within the labor process for a lesser amount (in the form of wages and other remuneration) in return. Due to the unequal structure of capital accumulation under imperialism, some workers are paid a price (wage) for labor-power (concrete labor) which is representationally greater than an equal quantity of abstract labor (value). Such a situation can exist only in a system of structural divisions among workers and the existence of steep wage scaling. This type of situation, which was never investigated by Marx or Engels, is readily apparent today.

When we say there is no white proletariat, for example, this does not preclude the notion that some workers of the white nation might be exploited. Instead, such exploited white workers do not themselves constitute a) a stable group with characteristics of a class with b) a clear exploited relationship to capital expansion generally c) in such a way that situates

them as capable, either structurally, strategically, or subjectively, of overthrowing the rule of capital.

Lenin was the first highly notably revolutionary to remark on the structural trend of the embourgeoisification of the working class in imperialist countries and its political implications for the proletarian movement:

As the result of a far-reaching colonial policy the European proletariat has partly reached a situation where it is not its work that maintains the whole of society but that of the people of the colonies who are practically enslaved... In certain countries these circumstances create the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat of one country or another with colonial chauvinism.

Against the chauvinism of Trotsky (the O.G. of First Worldism), Lenin in the last years of his life foresaw the center of gravity of the revolutionary movement heading 'east' toward the colonized and semi-colonial world comprised of nations oppressed under imperialism. This trend of thought was further systematized in the revolutionary foreign policy line in Maoist China known as global people's war, which saw the struggles of Africa, Asia, and Latin America as being the foremost threat to US-led imperialism. Both of these lines moved toward locating the 'proletariat' as the most exploited and oppressed peoples vis-a-vis capital accumulation ordered along imperialist lines.

At the bare minimum, and if we want to resort to the rhetoric of *The Communist Manifesto*, we could consider the proletariat as a class "with nothing to losing but its chains" and "a world to win." That is, the proletariat has no material stake or class interest in the current order and every reason to move in support of its own empowerment by overthrowing the ruling classes. Yet can this be said of the average First World worker?

In 2012, the U.S. median income was \$15,480. In the same period, the gross world product, the monetary measurement of all economic activity, was \$71.83 trillion. Divided equally among the population, the economic product of the world amounts to around \$10,000 per person (or approximately \$12,400 on the basis of purchasing power parity).

That means that if all economic output settled into direct income on an egalitarian basis and that no amount was invested into the public sector or private investment toward the replenishment and expansion of the means of production, most people in the United States would see a decline in their material livelihoods as rated by their ability to consume a certain quantity of labor. In effect, the median USian would go from having a \$15,480 income to all USians having an effective income of \$12,400, with nothing but individual savings to invest for the following year.

From this, we can see that many First World workers and at least over half of the population of the United States have an immediate material interest in preserving the system of global inequality. Can this material interest be measured in other ways? In some respects, it can. We



only need ask if a system could conceptually be built where all people are brought up to a material standard of living equal to today's First Worlders. Could all people around the world have 2,700 calorie diets and waste upwards of a third of their edible food, or would this impose insurmountable strain on local and global ecologies? Similarly, could all people live in large single family homes, drive personal vehicles 50 miles a day, dedicate huge amounts of resources and space toward sterile and unproductive grass yards, burn through personal technologies hardware (like phones and computers) almost as quickly as fashions, all without accomplishing even wider and more irreversible environmental destruction than we are witnessing today? The obvious answer is no. Thus, we can see how many First World workers have a material stake in the maintenance of capitalist-imperialism. Their relative luxury and privilege, after all, are both dependent on and defined by the exclusion of the majority of the working class.

If we must technically categorize on the basis of economics this section of the workers who are clearly not part of the proletariat, we might describe them as a mass petty-bourgeoisie. Such workers are 'petty-bourgeoisie' in that they are sustained both through the product of their own labor and the surplus generated via the exploitation of other workers. Though not a class unto itself (and more aptly described as the hanger-on of imperialism), this section often has its own independent class interest which is tied to the perpetuation of imperialism for its exclusive benefit vis-a-vis other workers.

Politically, the 'class consciousness' of the mass petty-bourgeoisie makes it a mass base of both social democracy and fascism. Under times of social peace, the mass working petty-bourgeoisie plays a role in pacifying oppressed peoples by injecting into their movements opportunism and revisionism, by sowing a million tiny lies about capitalist-imperialism and the struggle for communism. In times of social antagonism, the mass petty-bourgeoisie becomes the front-line defenders of imperialism and among the most fanatic supporters of reaction. 'Nuke them all,' for example, is not considered a valid perspective by the imperialist bourgeoisie. Yet this ultra-reactionary refrain about Third World and sections of formerly colonized peoples, if not a direct product of such petty-bourgeois conspicuousness, is functionally designed to tap into it. The mass petty bourgeois mentality of social democracy and fascism is inherently exclusionary. This comes to the fore when it demands a hand-off libertarian approach toward 'natural citizens' simultaneous to tighter border security and 'tough on crime' legislation targeting oppressed peoples. Though elements of the mass petty-bourgeoisie can and must be won over to the side of proletarian revolution, they are not as a group natural or consistent allies.

It is accurate to say that members of this 'mass-petty bourgeoisie' who do engage in revolutionary work are aiming for revolutionary 'class suicide.' That is, they are working to negate through conscious struggle the systems of oppression and exploitation from which they structurally benefit. This class suicide can only be accomplished through actively siding with and advancing the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat at large. Though few and far

between, such traitors to oppressive roles have existed throughout history, from the radical abolitionist and martyr John Brown to the revolutionary anti-imperialist and political prisoner David Gilbert. Despite the valuable contributions of handfuls of such ‘revolutionary traitors,’ their effective capacity to alone overthrow capitalism is nonexistent.

Abstractly speaking, it is possible to locate the proletariat in the realm of oppression. Oppression is a social relation external to production which nonetheless functions to mediate the economic relationship of exploitation. In contemporary society, the three main forms of oppression are national, gender, and the generalized hegemony of the worker-owner relationship. These ‘strands’ of oppression function to ‘tie down’ groups of people into subjugated roles thus making exploitation a ‘normal’ reality. Without oppression, exploitation could not function on the social and political level.

When speaking of a modern proletariat, we refer to a group primarily made up of nationally- and gender-oppressed sections of the workforce. In consequence, successful proletarian struggles tend to touch on, attempt to resolve, and combine the struggles against national, gender, and worker oppression. While an individual holding the identity of any or all groups vis a vis oppression may not be exploited, on the structural level such oppression tends to approximate and mediate exploitation.

And this brings us to the final question: what does the proletariat ultimately signify?

In world history generally and through revolution particularly, the proletariat represents the collective potential to end capitalism as a system of exploitation and eradicate oppression. More importantly, in doing so the proletariat synthesizes the long-term interest of humanity at large. This is why the proletarian world-view or consciousness is not simply restricted to the ideas and knowledge of the proletariat, but also utilizes the ideas and knowledge of other classes to advance its own struggle, and therefore qualitatively advances the furthestmost interests of human collectivity. In ‘coming into its own’ through liberating itself from exploitation by the bourgeoisie, the proletariat encounters and must resolve a whole host of contradictions internal and external to various groups. And, while various groups may in one way or another be negatively affected by capitalist-imperialism, it is only the modern proletariat united in struggle which has the collective capacity to be the leading force in the resolution of the various contradictions created and maintained under this mode of production.

In the normative Marxist lexicon, the word proletariat has lost its revolutionary meaning and become a convenient term to conceal actual contradictions in favor of a dogmatic and chauvinist view supporting privileged ‘workers.’ For Marxism to have significance as a superstructural force inspiring revolution, it needs to elaborate a clear and relevant understanding of what and who the proletariat – the central collective revolutionary force – is in contemporary society. Efforts to obscure or ignore this question have not advanced the revolutionary cause in any substantive manner, but have in fact done the opposite. For

Marxism to remain relevant, it needs to remain clear that the proletariat is that class in society whose exploited labor is a central basis of the expansion of capital, and is not simply 'all workers.' The chauvinistic and lazy application of failed and boring verdicts under the guise of 'Marxism' will no longer suffice. Instead, when analyzing 'what is the proletariat,' we should uphold a remark by Lenin and "always try to be as radical as reality itself."

# Problems with First Worldism

Nikolai Brown | 2012

First Worldism is a long-standing trend within 'left-wing' politics which preferences or exaggerates the role of First World workers to the effect of considering them friends or allies of revolution. First Worldism is a problem of class analysis. It sees the First World lifestyle not as a parasitic one involving the circulation of superprofits extracted from the Third World but simply as another form of the condition of economic exploitation. It is the failure on the part of nominal radicals to correctly answer the questions, "Who are our enemies? Who are our friends?"

First Worldism, which is often based on sentimentality or dogma, is fundamentally incorrect in terms of understanding the world. However, there are also several practical problems with the theoretical error.

## In the First World

The most visible result of First Worldism in the First World is that those engaged in it are "spinning their wheels without ever going anywhere." That is to say the most salient result of the work of First Worldist 'leftists' in the First World is the marginal existence of a First Worldist 'left.' Furthermore, as the First World left continues on in a comatose state, with occasionally just enough signs of life to give hope to some, reactionary trends and movements emanating from the First World have only increased in numbers, size, and strength. In essence, while crackerish Trots, crypto-Trots, and Democrats blather on about how exploited their First World cohorts are, an increasing number of their First World "proletarian" brethren are settling in and accepting (if not supporting) some of the most reactionary aspects of First World society.

Obviously the life of a First Worlder First Worldist is 'tough.' As it becomes clear that the First World so-called working class lacks the qualities that it is believed to hold and as organizing efforts remain stagnant, the idealism of nascent First Worldism typically gives way to frustration and cynicism. One out is extreme opportunism: increasingly tailing the mythical First World 'proletariat' and settling with its political leadership. Another is receding further into one's own ideas while ignoring the outstanding fact these ideas are as isolated and unpopular as ever among those whose class interests they are claimed to represent.

## In the Semi-Periphery and Third World

The problems of First Worldism in the semi-periphery and Third World are more fundamental. In essence, promoting the false understanding that First Worlders are exploited under capitalism creates a kind of false consciousness among non-First World actual proletarians. First Worldism is dangerous because it promotes capitalism in the semi-periphery and Third World. By claiming that First Worlders are simply exploited in qualitatively different ways, the struggle of oppressed and exploited peoples becomes not for national liberation, socialism, and communism, but to build the basis for a similar capitalist system and to be 'exploited like First Worlders.' First Worldism has an obvious impact in that dissuades the masses from staying on the long road of revolutionary struggle. Instead, First Worldism in the semi-periphery and Third World steers activity into reactionary class collaborationism and/or that which is inspired by the false hope of support from First Worlders. While First Worldism generally wishes to see a "bourgeoisie without a proletariat" and largely operates with this regard, as long as capitalism exists the exploited labor of work-worn proletarians will be the basis upon which the rest of society lives.

The revolution must be one of the Third World-centered proletariat against the system of structural theft. It must challenge and defeat not only the "1%" but also the 15-20% of the world at large which benefits and reproduces itself through capitalist-imperialist exploitation of semi-peripheral and Third World countries.

## Solution to First Worldism

Revolutionary struggles must be carried on not simply without the First World 'masses,' but against them. This is because surplus value extracted from the labor of Third Worlders in part sustains the living conditions of First Worlders.

That is not to say that a small percentage of First Worlders will not find dissatisfaction with their lives; nor that First Worlders on an individual level will not find cause to side with Third World peoples struggle and become genuine allies of revolution. But overall, this is the result of alienation or oppression, not exploitation. As such, there is no immediate basis for consistent unity between First World-centered net-exploiters and the Third World-centered proletariat. The world cannot wait for the First World 'masses' to get on board.

Because of the outstanding problems with First Worldism, i.e., those associated with the longstanding failure to correctly answer "Who are our enemies? Who are our friends?," revolutionary movements must reject and struggle against it. No longer can First Worldism be allowed to impede revolutionary struggles.

Now more than ever we must raise our voices, speaking with vigor, clarity and comprehensiveness, and drown out the siren song of First Worldism.

# **“Pretending” to be Reactionary**

Amber B. | 2017

“We are who we pretend to be, so we must be careful who we pretend to be.”  
— Kurt Vonnegut

It has been noted by members of the Alt-Right as well as those in the liberal media, the strange tendency for the veil of irony to provide a perfect cover for the incubation of ultra-reactionary ideas. We should be aware of this tendency, and the milieus and habits that encourage such conditioning. Richard Spencer himself, in an interview with *VICE*, noted that many of those he had talked to about the “Jewish question” had first began their investigation into far-right theories from the perspective of online trolls. They were, according to him, reading fascist and national socialist ideologues in order to become more familiar with the most inflammatory arguments they could then turn against liberal targets on the internet. In the process of a kind of “ironic” investigation into Nazism and the sarcastic defense of its principles, many of these would later become Nazis/Fascists/Alt-Right in earnest.

Not merely restricted to those on the Alt-Right, racist/misogynist “humor” has long provided a sound foundation for reproduction of dominant reactionary ideology. It is through ironic, tongue-in-cheek everyday racism regurgitated by both “left” and right that provides for a much more potent and militant acceptance of its precepts. If we say such things “ironically” and with an obvious contempt for its implications, we often believe we are safe from its effects. However what we see is the opposite: that sense of security allows us to reinforce reactionary habits/ideas. It is the acceptance of those “ironic” affirmations of racist and misogynist tendency that provide strategic cover for the metastasis of subliminal reaction.

After all, who benefits more from the culture of “ironic” racism, fascism, and misogyny than racists, fascists and misogynists? They are free to argue, within the boundaries given by the realm of “acceptable” speech, open season to express deeper ideological leanings. Jokes resonate with a deeper material reality for many people, and beyond cultivating even more bile for those most likely to face harm, there are even broader consequences. For instance, in an environment where individuals “ironically” distribute fascist and racist slogans/literature and ideas, the acceptability of such discussion is already determined. So long as one frames their interest in such texts as fleeting and sarcastic, they are given near-full access to its

platform. Such a situation allows for the incubation of genuine fascism, racism and misogyny, even where previously it was only “joking.”

This is not a stretch, since the reaction itself admits that the “ironic” reproduction of reactionary ideology has contributed greatly to their success on the battlefield of culture and propaganda. Long have misanthropic, social darwinist and racist jabs, delivered in an offhand way, resonated with white america especially, owing to the wild success of South Park and similar trash. The internet has only streamlined the process, with right-wing memes contributing quite successfully to the “education” of new crops of reactionaries. One can only say “hitler did nothing wrong” so many times before there is an implied belief in such a statement. It may have seemed ridiculous at first, but we are currently faced with the aftermath of such reckless and reactionary cultural norms, and the fact that such things remain acceptable even on the “left” has held back the development of progressive and revolutionary thought and formation. It has further alienated the Communist left from the oppressed masses, and isolated oppressed people within the movement itself. As communists, we comport ourselves accordingly and take seriously the processes of criticism and self-criticism. Discipline breeds discipline. Reaction breeds reaction. We do not need help accentuating the reactionary tendencies we all carry around with us, least of all through the toleration of dispositions hostile to the oppressed masses. Indeed, we criticize these tendencies in ourselves and our comrades and propagandize against them.

# Legionnaires: Defeating the “Soldiertariat” Myth

Amber B. | 2016

There is a stubborn faction of the left which still seeks to redeem and organize members of the amerikkkan military, ascribing them with the qualities of a revolutionary class. They constantly seek to reclaim baby-killers as part of the masses which should be organized for the defeat of capitalism, and as such, ward off any defamation of their character. They insist that the volunteer forces that fall in line for imperialist warfare abroad and systematic looting of entire continents are somehow just as much the “victims” of capitalism in the u.\$. as those they gun down abroad. One would not, in most cases at least, make these same arguments with regards to police in the united \$tates. Why the disconnect?

This misconception generally comes from two baseless assertions:

(1) the military disproportionately recruits the most impoverished and nationally oppressed masses, and (2) the experiences of those in the military tend to produce a proletarian class consciousness. These are hefty assumptions, which are entirely inconsistent with what we can see from the political tendencies of the military in the past decades. We question the validity of these claims, however it is insufficient to stop there; we must investigate the assumptions themselves, and how the context of recruitment constructs the consciousness of soldiers today.

## The Warrior Aristocracy

Things have changed in the decades after the inflation of the armed forces through conscription during the Vietnam “war” (read: Genocide) and the subsequent defeat and deflation. In the transition to a primarily volunteer force, something counterintuitive to the first-worldist left occurred. The first-worldist left expected the military to be utilized as some kind of refuge for the poor periphery of the united \$tates population. However, that is not what happened. Especially in the decade after 9/11, the military has transitioned into a gun club for amerikkka’s wide-eyed middle-class sons. The imperialist volunteer vengeance force that was raised to fight international “terrorism” in the Muslim countries of Iraq and Afghanistan (as well as those who were trained to rain missiles on a dozen more) were less and less the victims of a “poverty draft” which had been imagined into existence by those who remembered the inequities of conscription and service in the 1960s.



This has been documented by the neo-conservative Heritage Foundation in their study on the recruitment demographics of the United States military, which found that only about 10-11% of the United States military recruits come from the poorest quintile (defined as making less than \$33,000 annually), with a fourth of the military coming from areas whose median income is more than \$65,000 annually.<sup>1</sup> They gathered this information using addresses of personnel at the time of recruitment, which has faced much criticism by those who argue for the existence of a poverty-draft. What problems do they see with this method? Well, according to the *Boise Weekly* the statistics are unreliable because “[m]any recruits are college dropouts who list their last address – their college dorm – when they sign up,” which they believe would provide an inflated statistical portrait of average income.<sup>2</sup> They assert that this is the case without actually presenting any evidence.

As for the validity of the claim that, by and large, the military is made up of college dropouts who use their college residence as their permanent address: that is already a questionable assertion. It also raises questions about the kind of people they assume are “forced into the military by poverty” who are still equipped with the financial support to move out on their own to attend university. Furthermore, their label of “uneducated” seems a hardly fitting descriptor for a military which does not accept people without a high school diploma.<sup>3</sup> This is a deliberate deception; their assertions rarely contain vital evidence and rely on definitions of “education” that hardly fit the bill. Even more interestingly, this article assumes that those who do not finish college or do not attend must automatically be poor and forced into the military for that reason. This assumption is further jeopardized by the fact that most Americans have not earned a college degree. It is true that the Heritage Foundation, being quasi-fascist troop-worshippers, have their own motives for promoting a class-collaborationist and prosperous image of the military, however we judge their study on its merits rather than the inconvenience of its results.

Moving to the question of race in the military, it should not be surprising at this point that it is dominated by white people, who hold a numerical majority in every branch. Dealing with recruits, the study finds that Black recruits are overrepresented by 4% when compared to the overall population of Black youth aged 18-24, while at the same time white recruits are overrepresented by 5%. The only notably overrepresented group among recruits are Indigenous people, by almost 300% (though still making up only 2% of the total recruits). One must question whether these figures imply the armed forces are any less white-dominated with whites representing a 65% majority among new recruits during the height of the Iraq war.<sup>4</sup> However the traditional first-worldist claim is that the military disproportionately composed of the poor and nationally oppressed who are the primary targets for recruiters. This claim is put in further jeopardy by the fact that as a whole,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.heritage.org/static/reportimages/360142B8859DD8EDA9D80F008077F3B5.gif>

<sup>2</sup> <https://m.boiseweekly.com/boise/poor-and-uneducated-like-we-thought/Content?oid=933196>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/join-the-military-basic-eligibility.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.heritage.org/static/reportimages/3E59D41279449CAB99F8C7CF54E02351.gif>

veterans are half as likely to live in “poverty” by u.\$. standards, and in fact have consistently higher incomes than non-veterans.<sup>5</sup>

However, this does not even recognize or attempt to explain *why* there is an ongoing deflation of the armed forces. This reflects a potentially more revealing trend in the development of the armed forces of the imperialist core; a strategic shift in the imperialist military program after the double-defeat in Iraq and Afghanistan at the hands of the national resistance forces. With the intense mechanization of the military and strategic shifts in its campaigns, it has become politically useful to narrow down the military into a highly technical force, a force with access to some of the most expensive and destructive equipment in the world with which to maintain its military domination. Whereas before it seemed that just about anyone was eligible for military service, so long as they fit into very loose guidelines, it is now much more difficult to get accepted, with 80% of applicants being turned down.<sup>6</sup>

## Whose Vanguard?

It would not suffice to simply discredit soldiers purely on a basis of their economic position, because doing so fails to adequately deal with their interests and subjectivity as a class. The military is not simply another profession, but has its own distinct set of material conditions defined by the soldiers’ disciplinary functions as agents of the state, their role in the extended reproduction of world capital, and further by the process through which the ideology of the institution is imparted to those within it. This corporate unity within the military, the idea of each part playing an invaluable role necessary for success, is the basis for the reactionary collective mindset they maintain. Along with reinforcing imperialist and ultra-nationalist values, this has always made the military and the police the vanguard of fascism throughout history.

The first-worldist left continues to mistakenly consider discontent within the military as a chief indicator of openness to revolutionary politics. Furthermore, they suggest that if this “path from poverty” is truly the motivator in military service, Communists can and should quickly seize upon this discontent in a progressive fashion. However, even if we are to throw all of the statistics of the previous section in the garbage and start from left-liberal assumptions, we are still hard-pressed to arrive at their conclusions. Soldiers are not inclined, except in the case of the tiniest activist minorities and on an individual basis, to reject imperialism or settler-colonialism. In fact, we see veteran support for the most aggressive forms of imperialism, evidenced by the fact that twice as many veterans voted for Trump than for the neocon Clinton.<sup>7</sup> With many voters expressing disapproval of the current

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Profile\\_of\\_Veterans\\_In\\_Poverty\\_2014.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Profile_of_Veterans_In_Poverty_2014.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rt.com/usa/158992-military-80-percent-rejection-rate/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/election/2016/results/exit-polls/national/president>

trajectory of the united States, we can see that the expression of “discontent” among veterans is far from progressive.

Furthermore, regarding this “path out of poverty” thesis we must ask ourselves what this “path” entails. What better way to ingrain the core principles of the imperialist society than to reward the hard service of “our fighting men and women” with a generally higher standard of living? For the lower classes who join the imperialist armed forces, it serves as a transitory period wherein they are lifted into a state of greater social and economic mobility. This is their “reward” for serving on the frontlines as the workhorses of militant imperialism, ingrainning a petit bourgeois and fascistic consciousness. Their ideology and world outlooks are morphed by this experience, this much is obvious through the conservative and ultra-nationalist tendencies of veterans and veteran organizations, and the political groups they find themselves increasingly involved with during and after service, such as (drumroll) the KKK.<sup>8</sup> The discontent of soldiers is expressed in classic “stabbed in the back” rhetoric, and is more commonly used as a measure for disciplinary outbursts toward those “treacherous” segments of society, rather than toward any progressive anti-war policy.

The few progressive and revolutionary organizations which have historically been made up of veterans have necessarily rejected amerikan military interests, and have made up a nearly insignificant minority of those who served. Even in the 1960’s and 70’s when organizations such as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) were passing out leaflets detailing the genocidal crimes of the amerikans in Vietnam, the actual number of veteran supporters of the organization famously represented by arch-imperialist John Kerry only numbered roughly 30,000 by their own estimates—less than half those soldiers *killed* in Vietnam, and less than .5% of all veterans having served in-country during the Vietnam war.<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> However if we were to turn now to the contemporary examples of veteran peace organizations such as the Iraq Veterans Against the War (which also includes those veterans serving in Afghanistan) we would see ~2000 members throughout 61 chapters in the united States.<sup>11</sup> What’s more, IVAW cannot claim even an iota of VVAW’s praise, having organized many of their activities around ensuring soldiers gain better access to health services overseas and even going so far as to front a fundraising campaign to supply soldiers heading to Iraq and Afghanistan with better helmets and body armor.<sup>12</sup> These campaigns are nothing short of imperialist solidarity with the war effort despite whatever “anti-war” rhetoric they may be promoting.

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/5gkexq/the-kkk-and-american-veterans-part-1-666](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/5gkexq/the-kkk-and-american-veterans-part-1-666)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.vvaw.org/about/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.uswings.com/about-us-wings/vietnam-war-facts/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ivaw.org/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://wagingnonviolence.org/2016/01/soldiers-stop-believing-war-ivaw/>

Even on the most liberal or “left” spectrum, the inclinations of soldiers who have not consciously aligned against their national interests have led them to a continued endorsement of imperial and colonial occupations. The military has not just been a vital component of the historic fascist movements in the imperialist countries, it has also played the vanguard role, and often led the insurrectionary push to take on state power. There are more examples of this than of military organisations acting in a “progressive” manner. The veterans of the Freikorps, Sturmabteilung, Secret Army Organization, Black Shirts, etc. have served as the militant vanguard in the struggle for fascism. The class consciousness demonstrated most widely among the disenchanted imperialist butchers being that of the “legionnaire,” is eloquently described in a fabricated quotation from a Roman soldier’s letter that opens Lartéguy’s *The Centurions*:

We had been told, on leaving our native soil, that we were going to defend the sacred rights conferred on us by so many of our citizens settled overseas, so many years of our presence, so many benefits brought by us to populations in need of our assistance and our civilization.

We were able to verify that all this was true, and, because it was true, we did not hesitate to shed our quota of blood, to sacrifice our youth and our hopes. We regretted nothing, but whereas we over here are inspired by this frame of mind, I am told that in Rome factions and conspiracies are rife, that treachery flourishes, and that many people in their uncertainty and confusion lend a ready ear to the dire temptations of relinquishment and vilify our action.

I cannot believe that all this is true and yet recent wars have shown how pernicious such a state of mind could be and to where it could lead.

Make haste to reassure me, I beg you, and tell me that our fellow-citizens understand us, support us and protect us as we ourselves are protecting the glory of the Empire.

If it should be otherwise, if we should have to leave our bleached bones on these desert sands in vain, then beware of the anger of the Legions!

## Fuck the Troops

So what is to be done? The first-worldist left has proven unable to mobilize, in a progressive way, the mass of veterans (although, “mass” in this context relates to a very small minority of the whole amerikan population) and yet would ask that we pity them for their sacrifices. This patriotic nonsense does nothing to actually mold an alternative political culture of opposition to imperialism, and in fact only reinforces the hegemony of the ruling class. They continually ask us to think of soldiers who they claim have only taken up arms for amerika as a way out of poverty, but then ask us not to question, first of all, if that assertion is even true, and furthermore the logic of paving one’s path out of poverty with the blood of occupied peoples. The revolutionary movement should not be relegated to tailing the

reactionary demands of those most willing to fight and die in service of imperialism, but should rather work to combat the enemies of the world proletariat. The only way for the veterans of amerika's army and colonial occupation forces to mobilize themselves effectively against imperialism must inevitably include their own class suicide.

Of course we do not condemn on any moralist basis those who have made the terrible mistake of being a foot soldier of imperialism without considering their current class outlook. Instead, what is argued here is principally that we must take a proactive and aggressive stance toward class enemies and the enemies of the world proletariat. We should not give room to the liberal feel-good inclinations of first-worldist sympathies for imperialist butchers; instead we give support to those comrades who have betrayed the interests of the united \$tates and its army in order to fight on the side of the oppressed people of the world whom they were enlisted to occupy, murder, and enslave. The contingents of the oppressor classes which we break off to fight alongside the world proletariat in the global struggle for communism must not become the focus of our revolutionary program, but must align themselves under a program of the world proletariat. This is why it is imperative to remind ourselves who our enemies are, and why we still say "Fuck the troops!"

# **Socialism in One Settler Colony: A Convergence on Whose Land?**

Burn the Tombs | 2016

During the upcoming Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, a coalition of nominally left parties will be seeking unity with elements of the white populist wing of the Democratic Party currently represented by the Bernie Sanders campaign. Under the banner of a “Socialist Convergence,” the political goals of this collection of panel presentations and workshops are framed as responses to two guiding questions: “What’s next for the movement? How do we make a political revolution in this country?” For many involved, the aims of the conference are more concrete. One principal organizer, Tim Horras of Philly Socialists, has stated that his hope is for a “liberal-left alliance” to emerge from Socialist Convergence in order to pursue a “municipal strategy” together with Socialist Alternative. Kshama Sawant of Socialist Alternative has called for the founding of a “party of the 99 percent” to extend the expiration date Sander’s “political revolution”.

Socialist Convergence features an array of sponsors from the u.s. nationalist left. Given this, and the organizers’ claims that conditions for settler left unity are ripe, it is profitable to take a look at who and what is left behind in the name of unity: namely, Indigenous liberation and the global proletariat.

## **Left Unity On Whose Backs?**

No panel at Socialist Convergence will uphold a principled and comprehensive commitment to anti-imperialism as a cornerstone of left unity. Instead, notably, the conference will host a number of groupings with objectively Zionist politics as participants. The elevation of the sewer socialism of Socialist Alternative as a model for socialist organizing is revealing in this regard, and it is certain that this party’s Zionist predilections will not be contested as one of the conditions of unity. Indeed, the notion that Israel has a “right to exist” – that is, that a white supremacist settler colony has a right to exist – is a value Socialist Alternative shares with other sponsors, including the Democratic Socialists of America and the Green Party.

Socialist Alternative’s white supremacist political line on Palestine demands that the colonized, Indigenous Palestinians unite with the parasitic Zionist settlers to oppose the Israeli and Arab bourgeoisie, a formula that must flatly deny the reality of settler colonialism as a structure in order to claim coherence. Further, Socialist Alternative embraces Israel’s

fascistic obsession with national security, legitimating a discourse used to justify genocide, stating it is paramount that “the security concerns of the Israeli people [sic]” – colonizers – “be taken into account,” and that Zionist opposition to a free Palestine in all of their homeland must be honored. Instead, Socialist Alternative defends colonization as an inviolate “right” of the settler.

Through the colonial lenses of Socialist Alternative, “the national consciousness of Israeli Jews simply cannot be ignored. Socialist Alternative and the CWI, therefore, defends the right of the Israeli people [sic] to have their own state, Israel, alongside an independent Palestinian state.” For Socialist Alternative to so delimit the national aspirations of a colonized nation due to fretting over the fate of their colonizer is Eurocentrism at its most noxious nadir. Those who uphold Palestinian liberation beyond progressive liberal demands to “end [only part of] the occupation” will be required to either stay silent, render this an area of compromise, or find themselves outflanked. A free Palestine “from the river to the sea” and the concomitant destruction of the Zionist settler colony are part and parcel of a basic commitment to class struggle and internationalism, but these will assuredly not be a plank in any platform to emerge from the Socialist Convergence.

In light of this abdication, and coupled with the event’s derogation of internationalism and sidelining of anti-imperialism, it is clear that any “unity” emerging from this conference will be a national chauvinist unity, opposed to the interests of the global proletariat and oppressed nations of the Third World. Palestinian liberation is just one emblematic example of what such a convergence will leave behind. As Zak Cope and Torkil Lauesen conclude in their analytical introduction to *Marx and Engels: On Colonies, Industrial Monopoly, and the Working Class Movement*, “Fighting for higher wages and better living conditions for First World workers is reactionary outside of the struggle against imperialism. Government deficit spending, expanded welfare measures, and protected industry in the affluent countries are not necessarily socialist measures. Those groups, whether ostensibly left-wing or right-wing, which act to preserve the inequality of imperialist relations invariably promote national chauvinist solutions to problems of unemployment and declining living standards” (p. 52). Supporting the creation of a new, narrowly nationalist and social democratic electoral formation in the wake of the Sanders campaign is a call for a more “equitable” distribution, within the imperialist core, of the spoils of the global transfer of value from the Third World to the First World.

## Socialism in One Settler Colony

From the standpoint of Indigenous peoples the so-called 99% are not simply united in their collective indignation, but, more significantly, by their settler status. This is Indigenous Land.  
– Sandy Grande

Every inch of the settler colonial and imperialist nation now called “the united states of america” is stolen land. Specifically, this meeting is to take place on Lenapehoking, the Lenni-Lenape nation’s homeland, which was stolen through a series of genocidal frontier assaults and ethnic cleansing campaigns. Socialist Convergence does not even acknowledge this in their materials, nonetheless deal with its ramifications for communist struggle, as their politics and strategic considerations require its denial. A left unity emerging from a coalition of liberals, progressives, Greens, social democrats, anarchistic academics, and Cliffites will as a matter of course jettison Indigenous liberation and uphold the oppression of Global South workers. Without a commitment to decolonization, the restoration and return of Native land and sovereignty, what Socialist Convergence seeks is merely socialism in one settler colony – or in Fred Ho’s phrasing, a “Manifest Destiny Marxism.”

Against the settler left characterization of support for the struggle against colonialism as a species of “ultraleftism” and an inevitable failure, as all colonizers have historically averred, grasping the entwinement of settler colonialism with capitalism and class formation, including its embourgeoisement of the settler “masses” as a material basis for chauvinism, is essential in understanding the class dynamics of the settler colony, and thus for revolutionary theorizing. Following the insights Enāēmāchkiw Thupaq Kesīqnaeh arrives at in his essential intervention “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,”

It’s been said before that under imperialism nations become almost as classes, and this is true of the situation here on Occupied A’nó:wara Kawè:note. The class struggle remains of central importance, however it does not take the form classically prophesized by marxists and class struggle anarchists of an antagonistic contest between an amorphous multinational ‘proletariat’ at one pole and the bourgeoisie at the other. Rather the class-struggle is concentrated within the national-colonial question between oppressor nations and oppressed nations. This ‘(inter-)nationalization’ of the class struggle transforms it into a fight to the death between the proletariat, de-classed and other popular elements of the domestic colonies against the imperialist nation bourgeoisie and its enriched, bought-off garrison of petty-bourgeois settlers.

If there is to be a left unity that is not reducible to oppressor nation populism, parasitism and settlerism, it must be one that is uncompromisingly anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and internationalist in character. The ongoing theft of Native land and attendant genocidal assault on Indigenous nations and the super-exploitation of Global South workers constitute two foundational bases of the settler nation and its wealth. Those whose politics seek only to topple a capitalist settler sovereignty in order to erect a “socialist” settler sovereignty locate themselves as the “left” wing of fascism and imperialism.



# **The Verizon Strike: The Left Boot of Imperialism**

Joshua Alexander and Sarah Ensslin | 2016

In the aftermath of one of the largest union strikes in recent amerikan memory, the First Worldist left is enthusiastic in their support for what they see as the militancy of the working class. They defend the strike as a resurgence of proletarian labor struggles in the united states, claiming that the unity of labor unions is a signal to the First World Communist movement that their ascension to “working class” leadership is underway. Though it would appear that they have not looked too long or too hard at the discourse of these unionists, or at what their demands and histories are, otherwise it may disgust those with principles or a conscience. It is well known that the labor history of amerika is riddled with colonial racism and its general pro-imperialist stance; so what of the modern revival of union struggles? The pro-colonial and pro-imperial element of the First Worldist labor struggle is far from weakened (indeed, it is the essence of such struggles), and it would seem that its message is unapologetically passed along by the First Worldist left.

## **The Imperial Demands of Labor**

Among the demands of the communications workers of amerika (CWA: the union who led the strike) they made clear that the principle concern of theirs was the export of high-paying amerikan jobs to the Third World. In interviews conducted with the strikers themselves they complained of the company’s plan to export “amerikan” jobs overseas, and have made many standard nationalist overtures regarding the goals of the strike to preserve the integrity of amerikan labor.<sup>1</sup> Their demands come not only from an accusatory stance with regards to the Third World proletariat colluding with the verizon company to “steal amerikan jobs,” but by their own admission they are part of a privileged stratum of workers themselves. In fact, the average base salary of the strikers was about \$82,000, and when factored along with benefits it reaches an average \$100,000 or more.<sup>2</sup>

These are hardly the “proletarians” that the left has made them out to be, and their cause is hardly as noble. We are quite aware of how these workers have come to have such a privileged position in the arena of global labor. Their highly inflated wages are the result

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<sup>1</sup> <http://money.cnn.com/2016/04/13/technology/verizon-strike/index.html?iid=EL>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/the-verizon-strikers-shrinking-world>

of the parasitic super-exploitation of Third World workers by the imperialist countries. This process, however aware of it they may be, has rarely—if ever—been the focus of their political projects. They seem more keen to ignore these conditions in favor of the conspiratorial accusations of “job theft” and focus primarily on the effects of capital export as it relates to their concept of “offshoring” rather than on the slave-like conditions of Third World peoples. When they do mention these conditions, it is always in a tokenizing fashion which is both logically inconsistent with their assertions and does little in the way of demanding solidarity with them.<sup>3</sup> For the amerikan labor aristocracy, they see the super-exploitation of Third World workers as a challenge to their profession, rather than some humanitarian crisis.

## Their Connection to the AFL=CIA

What is even more telling about the CWA than their wages or rhetoric is their relationship to the major labor aristocrat cartel, the AFL-CIO (whom we affectionately term “AFL=CIA”), whose pro-imperialist record stretches back decades. The AFL=CIA has a long history to answer to, but more than that they have a continued record of collusion with imperialism. For example, a vocal supporter of the Verizon workers has been the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, an AFL=CIA union (the same union which lost the 1944 *James v. Marinship* supreme court battle in an attempt at locking out Black membership even in closed shops).<sup>4</sup> Anyone familiar with the AFL=CIA will know that the IBB routinely agitates for increases in military spending including “the need to modernize and expand the fleets of the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Navy,” based on the fact that many of their members make their livings by producing amerikan weapons utilized in imperialist pillage.<sup>5</sup> This is just one group of workers which has tied its destiny and livelihood to amerikan imperialism.

The AFL=CIA also unionizes the most reactionary sections of the imperialist apparatus, namely the Border Patrol Union and International Union of Police Associations, true criminal syndicates in the eyes of progressive humanity responsible for untold suffering for the internal colonies in the case of the latter, and terror against refugees and the international working class in the case of the former. In fact, even the CWA itself is a junior-contributor to the protection of the security forces with a sector that serves over 16,000 local and municipal workers employed as deputy sheriffs, probation officers, city and state police, as well as county and state correctional officers.<sup>6</sup> From top to bottom, it is clear that the company kept by the labor aristocrats of the CWA, just like all labor aristocrats in general, is wholly rotten and reactionary.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dailykos.com/story/2013/3/3/1191214/-On-Elaine-Chao-and-Racism>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.blackpast.org/primarywest/james-v-marinship-1944>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.boilermakers.org/resources/commentary/V42N2>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cwa-union.org/about>

## So What Then?

It is telling that this episode garnered so much support and effort from so-called “progressive” (that is not to say anti-imperialist) organizations and individuals while the struggles of refugees and victims of imperialist war go unaided, the machinations for further imperialist subterfuge and realization of global surplus-value go unopposed. The imperialists gain the continued, peaceful operation of their system along with the renewed collaboration of the CWA, and more broadly all labor aristocrats, to continue all of the above.

We will not tell you that there was—or is—one single alternative to the recent pro-imperialist circus on-which the efforts of progressives could have been better spent. But rather any number of things could have been undertaken with as much determination and effort. This past week heralded the 6-year anniversary of the solitary incarceration in a men’s prison of the heroic Chelsea Manning. Small and sporadic efforts at solidarity with her and other political prisoners were eclipsed by the Verizon “strike.” The imperialists continue to carry out conspiracies against nations like Venezuela and Brazil, wage imperialist war on Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and otherwise terrorize the world. The imperialist machine continues to extract global surplus-value unhindered by any significant strategic internal opposition.

And why? Because, in our estimation, the debilitated north american left relies psychologically on petty, assured victories delivered not by their effort in solidarity with oppressed peoples, but the machinations of the monopolies mediated by the Democratic Party. Such “victories” are in actual fact nothing but defeats. They represent the successful integration of supposedly progressive forces into the left boot of imperialism; the phenomenon known as opportunism which stabilizes the parasitic social contract, purchases peace and further includes the forces of progress as an eager party to their own degradation. It is a process which must be understood, critiqued and thoroughly rejected.